

THE ORATORS

AN ENGLISH STUDY

BY

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TO
STEPHEN SPENDER

Private faces in public places
Are wiser and nicer
Than public faces in private places.

PROLOGUE

BY LANDSCAPE reminded once of his mother's
figure

The mountain heights he remembers get bigger and
bigger :

With the finest of mapping pens he fondly traces
All the family names on the familiar places.

Among green pastures straying he walks by still
waters;

Surely a swan he seems to earth's unwise daughters,
Bending a beautiful head, worshipping not lying,
'Dear' the dear beak in the dear concha crying.

Under the trees the summer bands were playing;
'Dear boy, be brave as these roots', he heard them
saying:

Carries the good news gladly to a world in danger,
Is ready to argue, he smiles, with any stranger.

And yet this prophet, homing the day is ended,
Receives odd welcome from the country he so de-
fended:

The band roars 'Coward, Coward', in his human
fever,

The giantess shuffles nearer, cries 'Deceiver'.

BOOK I
THE INITIATES

I. ADDRESS FOR A PRIZE-DAY

COMMEMORATION. COMMEMORATION. What does it mean? What does it mean? Not what does it mean to them, there, then. What does it mean to us, here now? It's a facer, isn't it boys? But we've all got to answer it. What were the dead like? What sort of people are we living with now? Why are we here? What are we going to do? Let's try putting it in another way.

Imagine to yourselves a picked body of angels, all qualified experts on the human heart, a Divine Commission, arriving suddenly one day at Dover. After some weeks in London, they separate, one passing the petrol pumps along the Great North Road, leaving the dales on his left hand, to take all rain-wet Scotland for his special province, one to the furnace-crowded Midlands, another to the plum-rich red-earth valley of the Severn, another to the curious delta-like area round King's Lynn, another to Cornwall where granite resists the sea and our type of thinking ends, and so on. And then when every inch of the ground has been carefully gone over, every house inspected, they return to the Capital again to compare notes, to collaborate in a complete report,

which made, they depart as quietly as they came. Beauty of the scenery apart, would you not feel some anxiety as to the contents of that report? Do you consider their statistics as to the average number of lost persons to the acre would be a cause for self-congratulation? Take a look round this hall, for instance. What do you think? What do you think about England, this country of ours where nobody is well?

All of you must have found out what a great help it is, before starting on a job of work, to have some sort of scheme or plan in your mind beforehand. Some of the senior boys, I expect, will have heard of the great Italian poet Dante, who wrote that very difficult but wonderful poem, *The Divine Comedy*. In the second book of this poem, which describes Dante's visit to Purgatory, the sinners are divided into three main groups, those who have been guilty in their life of excessive love towards themselves or their neighbours, those guilty of defective love towards God and those guilty of perverted love. Now this afternoon I want, if I may, to take these three divisions of his and apply them to ourselves. In this way, I hope, you will be able to understand better what I am driving at.

To start with, then, the excessive lovers of self. What are they like? These are they who even in childhood played in their corner, shrank when addressed. Lovers of long walks, they sometimes be-

come bird watchers, crouching for hours among sunlit bushes like a fox, but prefer as a rule the big cities, living voluntarily in a top room, the curiosity of their landlady. Habituees of the mirror, famous readers, they fall in love with historical characters, with the unfortunate queen, or the engaging young assistant of a great detective, even with voice, of the announcer, maybe, from some foreign broadcasting station they can never identify; unable to taste pleasure unless through the rare coincidence of naturally diverse events, or the performance of a long and intricate ritual. With odd dark eyes like windows, a lair for engines, they pass suffering more and more from cataract or deafness, leaving behind them diaries full of incomprehensible jottings, complaints less heard than the creaking of a wind pump on a moor. The easiest perhaps for you to recognise. They avoid the study fire, at games they are no earthly use. They are not popular. But isn't it up to you to help? Oughtn't you to warn them then against tampering like that with time, against those strange moments they look forward to so? Next time you see one sneaking from the field to develop photographs, won't you ask if you can come too? Why not go out together next Sunday; say, casually, in a wood: 'I suppose you realise you are fingering the levers that control eternity!'

Then the excessive lovers of their neighbours. Dare-devils of the soul, living dangerously upon their

nerves. A rich man taking the fastest train for the worst quarters of eastern cities; a private school-mistress in a provincial town, watching the lights go out in another wing, immensely passionate. You will not be surprised to learn that they are both heavy smokers. That one always in hot water with the prefects, that one who will not pass the ball; they are like this. You call them selfish, but no, they care immensely, far too much. They're beginning to go faster. Have you never noticed in them the gradual abdication of central in favour of peripheral control? What if the tiniest stimulus should provoke the full, the shattering response, not just then but all the time. It isn't going to stop unless you stop it. Daring them like that only makes them worse. Try inviting them down in the holidays to a calm house. You can do most for them in the summer. They need love.

Next the defective lovers. Systems run to a standstill, or like those ship-cranes along Clydebank, which have done nothing all this year. Owners of small holdings, they sit by fires they can't make up their minds to light, while dust settles on their unopened correspondence and inertia branches in their veins like a zinc tree. That tomato house blown down by the autumn gales they never rebuilt. Wearers of soiled linen, the cotton wool in their ears unchanged for months. Often they are collectors, but of what? Old tracts, brackets picked up on the road, powders,

pieces of wood, uncatalogued, piled anyhow in corners of the room, or hidden under tea-stained saucers. Anaemic, muscularly undeveloped and rather mean. Without servants. Each hour bringing its little barrowful of unacted desires, mounting up day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year has made a slag heap miles high shutting out air and sun. It's getting rather smelly. The effort required for clearance will be immense. Dare they begin. Well, you've got to show them they'd jolly well better dare. Give them regular but easy tasks and see that they do them properly. Hit them in the face if necessary. If they hit back you will know they are saved.

Last and worst, the perverted lovers. So convincing at first, so little apparent cause for anxiety. A slight proneness to influenza, perhaps, a fear of cows, traits easily misunderstood or dismissed. Have a good look at the people you know; at the boy sitting next to you at this moment, at that chum of yours in the Lower School. Think of the holidays, your father, the girl you met at that dance. Is he one? Was she one? Yes, they are charming, but they've lost their nerve. Pray God, boys, you may not have to see them as they will be not so very long from now. 'What have you been up to?' you'd think; 'What did you ask for to be given that?' Faces in suffering so ugly they inspire feelings only of disgust. Their voice toneless, they stoop, their

gait wooden like a galvanised doll so that one involuntarily exclaims on meeting, 'You really oughtn't to be out in weather like this.' In some a simple geometrical figure can arouse all the manifestations of extreme alarm. Others haters of life, afraid to die, end in hospitals as incurable cases. These are they who when the saving thought came shot it for a spy. Unable to sleep at nights, they look at watches as the train passes, pushed struggling in towards a protracted deathbed, attended by every circumstance of horror, the hard death of those who never have and never could be loved.

Who have done this? There must be several here. Yes I can see some already. There you sit, who smooth sick pillows, devoted as lice, yet have no day-dreams: wince at no curse, are never ill, put kindness, words and sleekness in. You going to have friends, you're going to bring up children. You're going to be like this for ever, all the time, more terrible than the bursting of the bolted door or the exhausting adverse wind of dreams.

Now, boys, I want you all to promise me that you'll never be like that. Are you just drifting or thinking of flight? You'd better not. No use saying 'The mater wouldn't like it', or 'for my part I prefer to read Charles Lamb'. Need I remind you that you are no longer living in Ancient Egypt? Time's getting on and I must hurry or I shall miss my train. You've got some pretty stiff changes to make. We simply

can't afford any passengers or skrimshankers. I should like to see you make a beginning before I go, now, here. Draw up a list of rotters and slackers, of proscribed persons under headings like this. Committees for municipal or racial improvement—the headmaster. Disbelievers in the occult—the school chaplain. The bogusly cheerful—the games master—the really disgusted—the teacher of modern languages. All these have got to die without issue. Unless my memory fails me there's a stoke hole under the floor of this hall, the Black Hole we called it in my day. New boys were always put in it. Ah, I see I am right. Well look to it. Quick, guard that door. Stop that man. Good. Now boys hustle them, ready, steady—go.

II. ARGUMENT

I

Lo, I a skull show you, exuded from dyke when
no pick was by pressure of bulbs: at Dalehead a
light moving, lanterns for lambing. Before the fore-
noon of discussion, as the dawn-gust wrinkles the
pools, I waken with an idea of building.

Speak the name only with meaning only for us,
meaning Him, a call to our clearing. Secret the
meeting in time and place, the time of the off-shore
wind, the place where the loyalty is divided. Meeting
of seven, each with a talent.

On the concrete banks of baths, in the grassy
squares of exercise, we are joined, brave in the long
body, under His eye. (Their annual games under the
auspices of the dead.) Our bond, friend, is a third
party.

Smile inwardly on their day handing round tea.
(Their women have the faces of birds.) Walking in
the mountains we were persons unknown to our
parents, awarded them little, had a word of our own
for our better shadow. Crossing ourselves under the
arch of a bridge we crucified fear.

Crofter, leader of hay, working in sweat and

weathers, tin-streamer, heckler, blow-room major, we are within a vein's distance of your prisoned blood. Stranger who cannot read our letters, you are remembered.

Rooks argue in the clump of elms to the left. Expect what dream above the indented heel, end-on to traffic, down the laurelled drive?

At the frontier getting down, at railhead drinking hot tea waiting for pack-mules, at the box with the three levers watching the swallows. Choosing of guides for the passage through gorges.

The young mother in the red kerchief suckling her child in the doorway, and the dog fleaing itself in the hot dust. Clatter of nails on the inn's flagged floor. The hare-lipped girl sent with as far as the second turning. Talk of generals in a panelled room translated into a bayonet thrust at a sunbrowned throat, wounds among wheat fields. Grit from the robbers' track on goggles, a present from aunts. Interrogation of villagers before a folding table, a verbal trap. Execution of a spy in the nettled patch at the back of the byre. A tale of sexual prowess told at a brazier and followed by a maternal song. The fatty smell of drying clothes, smell of cordite in a wood, and the new moon seen along the barrel of a gun. Establishment of a torpedo base at the head of the loch; where the bye-roads meet, a depot for tractors, with sliding doors. Visit to a tannery in the hill-

village where the stream runs under the houses; to the mine with obsolete machinery, an undershot wheel, steam pipes in the open, swaddled in sacking. Designs for the flow sheet of a mill. Sound of our hammers in the solemn beat of a quarry, and the packing of labelled specimens in japanned boxes. Theories inter-relating the system of feudal tenure with metabolic gradients, and arguments from the other side of the lake on the formation of hanging valleys, interrupted by the daughter of the house with a broken doll. Writing reports for Him in the copper-green evenings. (Trunks caught by the grapnel dragged inert towards the spurting saw, ewers of warm milk, the sugary layer under the rind, and pipe-lines clamped to the rock) and at the tiny post-office, His word waiting.

If it were possible, yes, now certain. To meet Him alone on the narrow path, forcing a question, would show our unique knowledge. Would hide Him wounded in a cave, kneeling all night by His bed of bracken, bringing hourly an infusion of bitter herbs; wearing His cloak receive the mistaken stab, deliver his message, fall at his feet, He gripping our moribund hands, smiling. But never for us with notebooks there, a league of two or three waiting for low water to execute His will. The tripod shadow falls on the dunes. World of the Spider, not Him.

Rook shadows cross to the right. A Schoolmaster cleanses himself at half-term with a vegetable

offering; on the north side of the hill, one writes with his penis in a patch of snow 'Resurgam'.

Going abroad to-day? Under a creaking sign, one yellow leg drawn up, he crows, the cock. The dew-wet hare hangs smoking, garotted by gin. The emmet looks at sky through lenses of fallen water. Sound of horns in the moist spring weather, and the women tender. I feel sorry for you I do.

Girls, it is His will just now that we get up early. But watching the morning dredger, picking the afternoon fruit, wait; do not falsify our obedience. When we shuffle at night late round up-country stoves, although in waders, a dance of males, it is your hour; remember. It is your art just now against the inner life. Parting by hangars we are sorry but reborn.

Wrap gifts in clothes, prepare a present for a simpler nation. A heliograph seen from below, a camera with smuggled lenses: a soured drink for the tongue, a douche for the unpopular member, a dream dirt-cheap for the man of action. Leave the corks behind as warning of wires, let the shafts be fenced as before, leave ordinary kindness.

Going abroad to-night? The face lit up by the booking-clerk's window. Poetry of the waiting-room. Is it wise, the short adventure on the narrow ship? The boat-train dives accomplished for the hoop of the tunnel; over the derne cutting lingering, its white excreta. Too late: smelling the first sea-weed

we may not linger. The waving handkerchiefs recede
and the gulls wheel after screaming for scraps. Throb
of turbines below water, passing the mud islands,
the recurrent light. Past. Handrail, funnel, oilskins,
them, His will. The lasting sky.

II

Remember not what we thought during the frost,
what we said in the small hours, what we did in the
desert. Spare us, lest of our own volition we draw
down the avalanche of your anger: lest we suffer the
tragic fate of the insects.

O Four Just Men, spare us.

From the immense bat-shadow of home; from the
removal of land-marks: from appeals for love and
from the comfortable words of the devil,

O Dixon Hawke, deliver us.

From all opinions and personal ties; from pity and
shame; and from the wish to instruct,

O Sexton Blake, deliver us.

From all nervous excitement and follies of the
will; from the postponed guilt and the deferred pain;
from the oppression of noon and from the terror in
the night,

O Bulldog Drummond, deliver us.

From the surgeon's pioneering hand; from the

power of the red lamp; and from the death-will of the Jews,

O Ferrers Locke, deliver us.

From the encroaching glaciers of despair, from the drought that withers the lower centres: from the star Wormwood, and from the death by burning,

O Panther Grayle, deliver us.

By the flash of insight in the rears; by the slow influence of natural scenery; by the phrase in the book and by the word overheard on the platform,

O Poirot, deliver us.

In the moment of vision; in the hour of applause; in the place of defeat; and in the hour of desertion,

O Holmes, deliver us.

For those who dance in the capitals; for those who handle a saw; those who discuss the problem of style and those aware of the body; for those who have done everything and those who dare not begin,

O Cat with the Fiddle, hear us.

For those who cannot go to bed; for those in dormitories; for those in pairs; for those who sleep alone,

O Bull at the Gate, hear us.

For the devoted; for the unfaithful; for those in whom the sexual crisis is delayed; for the two against one, and for the Seven against Thebes,

O Goat with the Compasses, hear us.

For the virgin afraid of thunder; for the wife
obeyed by her husband; for the spinster in love with
Africa,

O Bear with the Ragged Staff, hear us.

For those who grow by division; for those who
protest their innocence; for those who decline to die,

O Blue Boar, hear us.

For those who borrow and for those who lend, for
those who are shunned on the towpath; for those
regarded in their households as saints,

O Swan with the Two Necks, hear us.

For sunbathers; for those who dress soberly; for
those who expect to be respected, and for those
who have been taught to adore,

O White Horse, hear us.

For those determined to suffer; for those who
believe they can control the weather,

O Jack Straw from your castle hear us.

For those capable of levitation; for those who have
days of collapse; for those whose impulses are
negative,

Fair Maid of Kent, hear us.

For those who elect to live in the bower; for those
on the hill; for those who return to the epoch of the
poisoner,

O Man laden with Mischief, hear us.

For those who take vows of silence; for those who
do not; for those who visit churches after the death
of sons,

O Marquis of Granby, hear us.

For all parasites and carrion feeders, for the
double rose and for domesticated animals,

O Green Man, hear us.

And that it may please thee to calm this people,

George, we beseech thee to hear us.

III

Came one after a ruined harvest, with a school-
room globe, a wizard, sorry. From the nipping
North Righteousness running. But where that warm
boy of the summer château? Found on wet roads
early this morning, patches of oil, the face of an
avenger, downwards. Speech of worn tools in a box,
thoughts from the trap.

Sound of guns in the city, the voice of the demon-
strator, 'Gentlemen, to-morrow we shall tie the caro-
tid.' What memory of self-regard from the locked
room, shaken by lorries, from the depressed areas?

Suspicion of one of our number, away for week-
ends. Catching sight of Him on the lawn with the
gardener, from the upper rooms of a house. His in-
sane dislike of birds. His fondness for verbal puzzles.

Friendly joking converting itself into a counterplot, the spore of fear. Then in the hot weeks, the pavement blistering and the press muzzled, the sudden disaster, surprising as a comic turn. Shutting the door on the machines, we stood in the silence, thinking of nothing. (Murder of a rook by weasels.) Some taking refuge in thankful disillusion, others in frank disbelief, the youngest getting drunk. Hysterical attempts of two women to reach him. The slow seeping in of their sly condolences, of the mass hatred of the villas. A child's sense of failure after burning a slug in a candle.

Daylight, striking at the eye from far-off roofs, why did you blind us, think: we who on the snow-line were in love with death, despised vegetation, we forgot His will; who came to us in an extraordinary dream, calming the plunging dangerous horses, greeting our arrival on a reedy shore. His sharing from His own provisions after the blizzard's march. The thrashing He gave the dishonest contractor who promised marvels in an old boy's tie. The old peasant couple's belief in His magical powers. His ability to smell a wet knife at a distance of half a mile. His refusal to wear anything but silk next to His skin. His reverent stories of the underpaid drunken usher who taught Him all. His tale of the Three Sorb Trees. His words after we had failed Him at the Roman bridge.

Love, that notable forked one, riding away from

the farm, the ill wind said, fought at the frozen dam, transforms itself to influenza and guilty rashes. Seduction of a postmistress on the lead roof of a church-tower, and an immature boy wrapping himself in a towel, ashamed at the public baths. From these stony acres, a witless generation, plant-like in beauty.

On the steps of His stone the boys play prisoner's base, turning their backs on the inscription, unconscious of sorrow as the sea of drowning. Passage to music of an unchaste hero from a too-strict country. March long black piano, silhouetted head; cultured daughter of a greying ironmaster, march through fields. The hammer settles on the white-hot ingot. The telescope focuses accurately upon a recent star. On skyline of detritus, a truck, nose up. Loiterer at carved gates, immune stranger, follow. It is nothing your loss. The priest's mouth opens in the green graveyard, but the wind is against it.

III. STATEMENT

I

MEN PASS through doors and travel to the sea, stand grouped in attitudes of play or labour, bending to children, raising equal's glass, are many times together, man with woman. To each an award, suitable to his sex, his class and the power.

One charms by thickness of wrist; one by variety of positions; one has a beautiful skin, one a fascinating smell. One has prominent eyes, is bold at accosting. One has water sense; he can dive like a swallow without using his hands. One is obeyed by dogs, one can bring down snipe on the wing. One can do cart wheels before theatre queues; one can slip through a narrow ring. One with a violin can conjure up images of running water; one is skilful at improvising a fugue; the bowel tremors at the pedal-entry. One amuses by pursing his lips; or can imitate the neigh of a randy stallion. One casts metal in black sand; one wipes the eccentrics of a great engine with cotton waste. One jumps out of windows for profit. One makes leather instruments of torture for titled masochists; one makes ink for his son out of oak galls and

rusty nails. One makes bedsteads, adorned with carvings, at the request of friends. One in a red-brick villa makes designs for a bridge, creates beauty for a purpose. One is eloquent, persuades committees of the value of spending: one announces weddings in a solemn voice. One is told secrets at night, can stop a young girl biting her nails. One can extirpate a goitre with little risk. One can foretell the migrations of mackerel; one can distinguish the eggs of sea-birds. One is a lightning calculator; he is a young one. One is clumsy but amazes by his knowledge of time-tables. One delivers buns in a van, halting at houses. One can emend a mutilated text; one can estimate the percentage of moisture in a sample of nitre. One decorates a room for a lady in black and silver; one manufactures elephant drums for a circus. One has an extraordinary capacity for organising study circles. One fosters snowdrops in a green bowl. One does nothing at all but is good.

Summon. And there passed such cursing his father, and the curse was given him.

II

Do not listen at doors.

On lawns in flannels, in garages, in golf clubs, talking, starting slightly at the shooting, the small disaster on the limitless plain, returning from

matches after the streets are lit, who can protest at the words from the other room.

One slips on crag, is buried by guides. One gets cramp in the bay, sinks like a stone near crowded tea-shops. One is destroyed in his bath, the geyser exploding. One is arrested for indecent exposure. One suffers from an intestinal worm; men remark on his paleness. One believes himself to be two persons, is restrained with straps. One cannot remember the day of the week. One is impotent from fear of the judgment. One pays for foolishness with the loss of land. One loses his job for an error in long division. One drinks alone in another country. One repels by unsightly facial eruptions; one is despised for wearing stiff collars. The wife of one is unfaithful with schoolboys. One is bullied by an elder sister; one is disappointed in his youngest son.

Always think of the others.

One is saved from drowning by a submerged stake. One healed by drinking from a holy well. One is honoured by a countess with a gift of grapes. One is hailed as the master by monthly reviews. One is known in his club as 'the Skipper'. One discovers in middle age his talent for painting. One is a hero, covered with medals, is greeted by bands. One wins a battle through a change in the weather. One has a unique collection of indigenous insects. One is promoted for his suggestions respecting overhead

charges. One makes a fortune out of a locking device for lifts. One receives a grant from a fund for research; one is invited to give a course of lectures on a philosophical subject. One discovers a new variety of sneeze wort; it shall be called by his name. The mayorship of one is commemorated by a public lavatory at the cross-roads. One is famous after his death for his harrowing diary.

Have seen the red bicycle leaning on porches and the cancelling out was complete.

III

An old one is beginning to be two new ones. Two new ones are beginning to be two old ones. Two old ones are beginning to be one new one. A new one is beginning to be an old one. Something that has been done, that something is done again by someone. Nothing is being done but something being done again by someone.

Life is many; in the pine a beam, very still: in the salmon an arrow leaping the ladder. The belly receives; the back rejects; the eye is an experiment of the will. Jelly fish is laziest, cares very little. Tapeworm is most ashamed; he used to be free. Fish is most selfish; snake is most envious, poisoned within; bird is most nervous; he is shot for his spirit. Eagle is

proudest. Bull is stupidest, oppressed by blood. Insect is most different; he multiplies for another reason; he is not with us.

The man shall love the work; the woman shall receive him as the divine representative; the child shall be born as the sign of the trust; the friend shall laugh at the joke apparently obscure. The boy and the girl shall not play together; they shall wait for power; the old shall wait in the garden, happy for death. The leader shall be a fear; he shall protect from panic; the people shall reverence the carved stone under the oak-tree. The muscular shall lounge in bars; the puny shall keep diaries in classical Greek. The soldier shall say 'It is a fine day for hurting'; the doctor shall speak of death as of a favourite dog. The glutton shall love with his mouth; to the burglar love shall mean 'Destroy when read'; to the rich and poor the sign for 'our money'; the sick shall say of love 'It's only a phase'; the psychologist, 'That's easy'; the *****, 'Be fair'. The censor shall dream of knickers, a nasty beast. The murderer shall be wreathed with flowers; he shall die for the people.

Sun is on right, moon on left, powers to earth. The action of light on dark is to cause it to contract. That brings forth.

IV. LETTER TO A WOUND

THE MAID has just cleared away tea and I shall not be disturbed until supper. I shall be quite alone in this room, free to think of you if I choose and believe me, my dear, I do choose. For a long time now I have been aware that you are taking up more of my life every day, but I am always being surprised to find how far this has gone. Why, it was only yesterday, I took down all those photographs from my mantelpiece—Gabriel, Olive, Mrs. Marshall, Molim, and the others. How could I have left them there like that so long, memorials to my days of boasting? As it is, I've still far too many letters. (Vow. To have a grand clearance this week—hotel bills—bus tickets from Damascus, presentation pocket-mirrors, foreign envelopes, etc.)

Looking back now to that time before I lost my 'health' (Was that really only last February?) I can't recognise myself. The discontinuity seems absolute. But of course the change was really gradual. Over and over again in the early days when I was in the middle of writing a newsy letter to M, or doing tricks in the garden to startle R. and C., you showed your resentment by a sudden bout of pain. I had out-

bursts, wept even, at what seemed to me then your insane jealousy, your bad manners, your passion for sporting things. What a little idiot I was not to trust your more exquisite judgment, which declined absolutely to let me go on behaving like a child. People would have tried to explain it all. You would not insult me with pity. I think I've learned my lesson now. Thank you, my dear. I'll try my hardest not to let you down again.

Do you realise we have been together now for almost a year? Eighteen months ago, if anyone had foretold this to me I should have asked him to leave the house. Haven't I ever told you about my first interview with the surgeon? He kept me waiting three quarters of an hour. It was raining outside. Cars passed or drew up squeaking by the curb. I sat in my overcoat, restlessly turning over the pages of back numbers of illustrated papers, accounts of the Battle of Jutland, jokes about special constables and conscientious objectors. A lady came down with a little girl. They put on their hats, speaking in whispers, tight-lipped. Mr. Gangle would see me. A nurse was just coming out as I entered, carrying a white-enamelled bowl containing a pair of scissors, some instruments, soiled swabs of cotton wool. Mr. Gangle was washing his hands. The examination on the hard leather couch under the brilliant light was soon over. Washing again as I dressed he said nothing. Then reaching for a towel turned, 'I'm afraid', he said. . . .

Outside I saw nothing, walked, not daring to think. I've lost everything, I've failed. I wish I was dead. And now, here we are, together, intimate, mature.

Later. At dinner Mrs. T. announced that she'd accepted an invitation for me to a whist-drive at the Stewarts' on Wednesday. 'It's so good for you to get out in the evenings sometimes. You're as bad as Mr. Bedder.' She babbled on, secretly disappointed, I think, that I did not make more protest. Certainly six months ago she couldn't have brought it off, which makes me think what a great change has come over us recently. In what I might call our honeymoon stage, when we had both realised what we meant to each other (how slow I was, wasn't I?) and that this would always be so, I was obsessed (You too a little? No?) by what seemed my extraordinary fortune. I pitied everybody. Little do you know, I said to myself, looking at my neighbour on the bus, what has happened to the little man in the black hat sitting next to you. I was always smiling. I mortally offended Mrs. Hunter, I remember, when she was describing her son's career at Cambridge. She thought I was laughing at her. In restaurants I used to find myself drawing pictures of you on the bottom of the table mats. 'Who'll ever guess what that is?' Once, when a whore accosted me, I bowed, 'I deeply regret it, Madam, but I have a friend.' Once I carved on a

seat in the park 'We have sat here. You'd better not.'

Now I see that all that sort of thing is juvenile and silly, merely a reaction against insecurity and shame. You as usual of course were the first to realise this, making yourself felt whenever I had been particularly rude or insincere.

Thanks to you, I have come to see a profound significance in relations I never dreamt of considering before, an old lady's affection for a small boy, the Waterhouses and their retriever, the curious bond between Offal and Snig, the partners in the hardware shop on the front. Even the close-ups on the films no longer disgust nor amuse me. On the contrary they sometimes make me cry; knowing you has made me understand.

It's getting late and I have to be up betimes in the morning. You are so quiet these days that I get quite nervous, remove the dressing. No I am safe, you are still there. The wireless this evening says that the frost is coming. When it does, we know what to expect, don't we? But I am calm. I can wait. The surgeon was dead right. Nothing will ever part us. Good-night and God bless you, my dear.

Better burn this.

BOOK II

JOURNAL OF AN AIRMAN

JOURNAL OF AN AIRMAN

A SYSTEM organises itself, if interaction is undisturbed. Organisation owes nothing to the surveyor. It is in no sense pre-arranged. The surveyor provides just news.

The effect of the enemy is to introduce inert velocities into the system (called by him laws or habits) interfering with organisation. These can only be removed by friction (war). Hence the enemy's interest in peace societies.

Nothing shows the power of the enemy more than that while the fact that a state of tension seeks to relieve itself, seems to us perfectly obvious, an orderly arrangement, the natural result of such an effort, is inexplicable to us without introducing first causes and purposive ends.

The second law of thermodynamics—self-care or minding one's own business.

But—

(1) It is a sure sign of a busybody if he talks of *laissez-faire*.

(2) Self-care is not to be confused with self-regard. Self-care is care-free. Self-regard is the treating of news as a private poem; it is the consequence of eavesdropping.

Note—Self-regard, in origin a mere accident of overcrowding, like haemophilia is a sex-linked disease. Man is the sufferer, woman the carrier. ‘What a wonderful woman she is!’ Not so fast: wait till you see her son.

✓ *A Sure Test.*

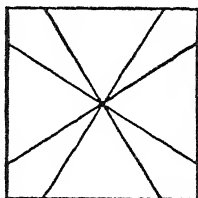


FIG. 1

Give the party you suspect the above figure and ask him to pick out a form from it.

If he picks out either of the two crosses below (Fig. 2)

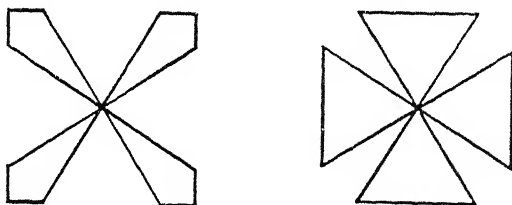


FIG. 2

you may accept him as a friend, but if he chooses such a form as Fig. 3

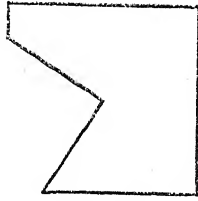


FIG. 3

it is wiser to shoot at once.

THE ENEMY IS A LEARNED NOT A NAÏVE OBSERVER

Note—Naïve observation—insight.

Introspection —spying.

The Circle.

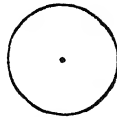


FIG. 4

There is a centre and a circumference, and between them is awareness of interdependence—sympathy.

The enemy attempts to disturb this awareness by theories of partial priority.

The Two Circles.

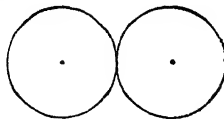


FIG. 5

Between circumference and circumference—
awareness of likeness—kindness. Between centre and
centre, awareness of difference—love.

THE AIRMAN IS THE AGENT OF THIS CENTRAL
AWARENESS

Note 1—The relation between the centres of circles
lying on the same axis—ancestor worship. This
has nothing to do with history, which is the circle's
after-image of itself exploited for private ends.

After the death of their proud master, who
Stood man-high in his socks and paid his debts,
The clumsy pilferer whose back was sore,
The nasty lave-eared pop-eyed bitch
Out of their envy of the ordinary
And dreading the imitations of the Boots,
Started their legends in the servants' hall,
Denying weakness by believing legends,
Lacking not only in the Master's wit
But the Boots' habit just to use his eyes.
'He was an ogre taller than a mill
Who slew all-comers greedy for their brass—
We dared not leave our houses after dark.
No, he had bat's wings, dog's head, scorpion's tail.
A dragon living in the marsh, that stole
My lovely Maggie on her fourteenth birthday.'

But now these offspring of their lukewarm bed,
Reared in a tidy nursery, poops and smarties,

Who pilfer always but are never whipped,
 Who have not seen a body undiseased.
 Denying legends, believe weakness pride,
 Rifle the giant's grave but cannot sleep,
 Drain out the Dragon's Pond but die from dropsy.

The true ancestral line is not necessarily a straight or continuous one. Take a simple biological analogy, black and white colour, with white recessive to black.

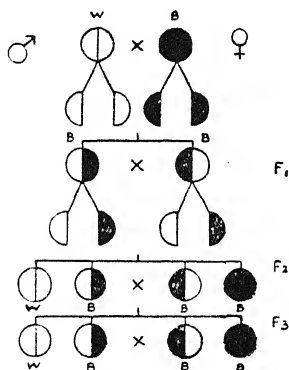


FIG. 6

In the F_3 generation the true ancestor of the pure white is his uncle or his great grandfather.

My mother's dislike of my uncle, the people's satisfaction at crashes. 'If the Lord had intended people to fly He'd have given them wings', compared with their day-dreams of looping the loop, the falling leaf, dragging their chum from blazing fuselage—signs of a mixed character. Most people mixed

characters—the two-faced, the obscure and amazed, the touch-line admirers.

Note 2—The aeroplane has only recently become necessary, owing to the progress of enemy propaganda, and even now not for flying itself, but as a guarantee of good faith to the people, frightened by ghost stories, the enemy's distorted vision of the airman's activities.

★ ★ ★

Vadill of Uirafirth, Stubbo, Smirnadale, Hammar and Sullom, all possible bases: particularly at Hubens or Gluss. Survey to be completed by Monday.

At Grind of the Navir to-day watching skuas.

You are a man, or haven't you heard
That you keep on trying to be a bird?

★ ★ ★

Of the enemy as philosopher. Talking of intellect-will-sensation as real and separate entities. The Oxford Don: 'I don't feel quite happy about pleasure.'

★ ★ ★

We have brought you, they said, a map of the
country;
Here is the line that runs to the vats,
This patch of green on the left is the wood,
We've pencilled an arrow to point out the bay.

No thank you, no tea; why look at the clock.
Keep it? Of course. It goes with our love.

We shall watch your future and send our love.
We lived for years, you know, in the country,
Remember at week-ends to wind up the clock.
We've wired to our manager at the vats.
The tides are perfectly safe in the bay
But whatever you do don't go to the wood.

There's a flying trickster in that wood,
And we shan't be there to help with our love.
Keep fit by bathing in the bay,
You'll never catch fever then in the country.
You're sure of a settled job at the vats
If you keep their hours and live by the clock.

He arrived at last; it was time by the clock,
He crossed himself as he passed the wood
Black against evening sky the vats
Brought tears to his eyes as he thought of their love;
Looking out over the darkening country
He saw the pier in the little bay.

At the week-ends the divers in the bay
Distracted his eyes from the bandstand clock;
When down with fever and in the country
A skein of swans above the wood
Caused him no terror; he came to love
The moss that grew on the derelict vats.

And he has met sketching at the vats
Guests from the new hotel in the bay;
Now curious following his love,
His pulses differing from the clock,
Finds consummation in the wood
And sees for the first time the country.

Sees water in the wood and trees by the bay,
Hears a clock striking near the vats;
This is your country and the home of love.

* * *

The terrible rat-courage of the enemy. The stout clergyman at our hotel estimating on the back of an envelope the height of the waterfall for the hydraulic engineer.

* * *

The Enemy as Observer.

His remarks, like those of invalids and precocious children half-true. His accuracy of description of symptoms compared with his prescription.

‘The dog is sick. You see, the hind legs are paralysed. We must get him to walk. Give him a table-spoonful of this arsenic three times a day.’ But, doctor, he is suffering from arsenical poisoning.

The antithesis between the passions and reason. The passions are nothing, but the unreal parts as seen by his learned reason (see Fig. 1) of the unity of passion of which nothing can be said but that it is the effort of a thing to realise its own nature. (*N.B.*, however, that the whole has its *real* parts.)

Man miserable without diversion. But diversion is human activity. A man doing nothing is not a man.

Their extraordinary idea that man's only glory is to think.

The misery of a dispossessed king. Who should know that better than the usurper?

The enemy's sense of humour—verbal symbolism. Private associations (rhyming slang), but note that he is serious, the associations are constant. He means what *he* says.

Practical jokes consist in upsetting these associations. They are in every sense contradictory and public, *e.g.* my bogus lecture to the London Truss Club. Derek's seduction of Mrs. Solomon by pretending to have been blessed by the Pope.

* * *

We leave to-morrow. Uncle Sam is arranging the final sing-song with all the assurance of a non-airman. Catching the largest fish, sieving the funniest story for the ladies, abrogating to oneself the right of feeding the hotel gull, such are the sole manifestations reserved for the spirit when all the risks are known. After tea Bob and Stan, the boy fishermen, will give an exhibition of Japanese wrestling on the floor of the lounge. Community singing of war-time songs with lull for a moment all awareness of lost contracts. At dinner an imaginary telegram of regret from a guest who has left the hotel to die may amuse. In the hall a Highland reel will, of course, be

attempted, lit up by pocket torches fetched hurriedly from the bedrooms. Yes, but all the time distant but distinct as the eyepiece image in field-glasses, the thought 'What is to be done? Punch was mistaken; we ought never to have come.' Trapped. Gangrene has already set in.

Only once here, quite at the beginning, and I put it back. Uncle Sam, is he one too? He has the same backward-bending thumb that I have. I wonder. It's going to be alright. Courage. The daily exercise of the will in trivial tasks.

The Airman's Alphabet.

ACE—	Pride of parents and photographed person and laughter in leather.
BOMB—	Curse from cloud and coming to crook and saddest to steeple.
COCKPIT—	Soft seat and support of soldier and hold for hero.
DEATH—	Award for wildness and worst in the west and painful to pilots.
ENGINE—	Darling of designers and dirty dragon and revolving roarer.

FLYING—	Habit of hawks and unholy hunting and ghostly journey.
GAUGE—	Informer about oil and important to eye and graduated glass.
HANGAR—	Mansion of machine and motherly to metal and house of handshaking.
INSTRUMENT—	Dial on dashboard and destroyer of doubt and father of fact.
JOYSTICK—	Pivot of power and responder to pressure and grip for the glove.
KISS—	Touch taking off and tenderness in time and firmness on flesh.
LOOPING—	Flying folly and feat at fairs and brave to boys.
MECHANIC—	Owner of overalls and interested in iron and trusted with tools.
NOSE-DIVE—	Nightmare to nerves and needed by no one and dash toward death.

OBSERVER—	Peeper through periscope and peerer at pasture and eye in the air.
PROPELLER—	Wooden wind-oar and twisted whirler and lifter of load.
QUIET—	Absent from airmen and easy to horses and got in the grave.
RUDDER—	Deflector of flight and flexible fin and pointer of path.
STORM—	Night from the north and numbness nearing and hail ahead.
TIME—	Expression of alarm and used by the ill and personal space.
UNDERCARRIAGE—	Softener of shock and seat on the soil and easy to injure.
VICTIM—	Corpse after crash and carried through country and atonement for aircraft.
WIRELESS—	Sender of signal and speaker of sorrow and news from nowhere.

X— Mark upon map
 and meaning mischief
 and lovers' lingo.

YOUTH— Daydream of devils
 and dear to the damned
 and always to us.

ZERO— Love before leaving
 and touch of terror
 and time of attack.

Three signs of an airman—practical jokes—nervousness before taking off—rapid healing after injury.

Of the Enemy.

His collar was spotless; he talked very well,
He spoke of our homes and duty and we fell.

Three kinds of enemy walk—the grandiose stunt
—the melancholic stagger—the paranoid sidle.

Three kinds of enemy bearing—the condor stoop
—the toad stupor—the robin's stance.

Three kinds of enemy face—the June bride—the
favourite puss—the stone in the rain.

Three kinds of enemy eye—the lobster—the boot-
button—the submarine.

Three kinds of enemy hand—the marsh—the
claw—the dead yam.

Three kinds of enemy clothing—fisherman's pockets—Dickens' waistcoats—adhesive trousers.

Three enemy traits—refusal to undress in public—proficiency in modern languages—inability to travel back to the engine.

Three enemy occupations—playing cards—collecting—talking to animals.

Three terms of enemy speech—I mean—quite frankly—speaking as a scientist, etc.

Three signs of an enemy letter—underlining—parentheses in brackets—careful obliteration of cancelled expressions.

Three enemy questions—Am I boring you?—Could you tell me the time?—Are you sure you're fit enough?

Three enemy catchwords—insure now—keep smiling—safety first.

Three enemy don'ts—don't kiss your baby on the mouth—don't lean out of the carriage window—don't miss this.

Three signs of an enemy country—licensed hours—a national art—nursery schools.

Three signs of an enemy house—old furniture—a room called the Den—photographs of friends.

Three warnings of enemy attack—depression in the mornings—rheumatic twinges—blips on the face.

Three symptoms in convalescence—nail-biting—nightmares—short-sight.

Three results of an enemy victory—impotence—cancer—paralysis.

Three counter attacks—complete mastery of the air—ancestor worship—practical jokes.

★ ★ ★

Monday—Interviewed A about his report.

Tuesday—Pamphlet dropping in Bridgenorth area.

Wednesday—Address at Waterworm College.

Thursday—The Hollies, 7.30.

Friday—See M about the gin to be introduced into the lemonade at the missionary whist-drive.

Saturday—Committee meeting.

Sunday—Break up the Mimosa's lecture on blind flying.

★ ★ ★

As I thought, A tells me they have been in Kettlewell and most of the outlying farms. A doesn't believe they intend to move before October, which should give us time if only B will move. We know for a fact that tanks are being built at Cockshirt Forge. Can't B see what this means?

Trains keep stopping regular as dogs by certain posts. The red dormitory wing of the Academy extrudes a succession of white and black particles which, obedient to laws of attraction and repulsion, quickly assume group patterns, and caught by a northerly current, stream slowly toward the green square. Nurse-maids pause on the esplanade for mutual investigations. The band is leaving the Winter Gardens by an emergency exit. A lady has fainted. Time for lunch. There isn't going to be very much lunch unless you all wake up. The group snapped at the fifth tee against a background of Scotch firs, frowning, conscious of their pipes, cellular underwear, the train whistle in the valley, the tall capless one in the back row deliberately half-hidden, are taken for ambassadors. In the crowded marquee near the front windows the vicar presents the beautiful spy with a handsome eight-day clock, the first prize in the ladies' croquet competition, signs for a registered package brought him by the gardener, with a nickel-plated fountain pen, the gift of his parishioners after twenty years of services. 'A treaty has been arranged', say the people, and are reassured. The agents smile for a moment then turn back to their charming companions.

Another is afraid and would be safe. Every day his journeys to escape the danger extend further, get more and more dangerous. Circling anxiously for

a landing over icy tundras, firing the last drum against frenzied tribes, he can remember a time when a five-minute walk to an aunt's house was quite sufficient. On maps to his red-ink line crossing and re-crossing, sweeps ever wider, to end in a cross marking his approximate position when the last wireless was received, or to be stopped by heart failure at a branch line station among kindly but inconvenienced officials.

Last day but ten
It's moving again.
Last day but nine
I've forgotten the sign.
Last day but eight
And it's getting late.
Last day but seven
Why aren't there eleven?
Last day but six
I don't like its tricks.
Last day but five
O God, it's alive.
Last day but four
I can't live any more.
Last day but three
Now it's looking at me.
Last day but two
What shall I do?
Last day but one

I think I'll run.
Last day of all
It's here and I fall.

at are there not after all some houses to which
is does not apply? Cases of immunity, queer to
rch, but quite authentic?
re a home, rather than name which the enemy
employ any circumlocution; there a figure he
cross the street to avoid; assume an interest in a
er's window rather than meet that incorruptible
The Hollies, for instance, their most intrepid
d steer clear of though disobeying the most
at order. So far I have said nothing to E. How
l he understand a danger more remote from
than the crouching of a sabre-tooth tiger for a
ize-Age huntsman, or the unsheathing of a
e in a Shanghai bar?

y October:

ll Siskens to be replaced by Bulldogs.

Short Gunards for reconnaissance.

Vickers 163 for troop conveyance.

Gloucester s.s.lg for fast fighting.

Moth trainer fully equipped for advanced
ing.

ecure Harvey for first air classes.

arling to replace ffennell (who is perfectly use-
at Hawes.

HURRY. NO MORE GRATE GAZING.

★ ★ ★

Dawn 13,000 ft. Shadows of struts falling across the cockpit. Perfect calm, light, strength. Yesterday positively the last time. Hands to remember please, always.

★ ★ ★

Continuity and Discontinuity.

Both true. Continuity in that the *existence* of a whole results from the sum of its parts. Discontinuity in that its *nature* cannot be *inferred* from theirs. The enemy's two waves of attack.

(1) Flux-mongers (shock-troops for destruction).

(2) Order-doctrinaires (establishment of martial law).

The latter of course do not admit collusion into the former, claim rather to come as redeemers.

One must draw the line somewhere. Theory of numbers. Dedekind's section. Not to confuse the real line with that drawn for personal convenience, to remember the margin of safety. By denying the existence of the real line, the enemy offers relief, at a price, from their own imaginary one. Their exploitation of this fear—building societies—summer camps.

★ ★ ★

Fourteenth anniversary of my Uncle's death. Fine. Cleaned the air-gun as usual. But what have I

done to avenge, to disprove the boy's faked evidence at the inquest? NOTHING (never reloaded since it was found discharged by your untasted coffee). Give me time. I PROMISE.

Only those in the last stage of disease could believe that children are true judges of character. The child's life is intermittent, isolated desultory jerks now and then, which scandalise and alarm its parents, but for the most part it is a motor run off their accumulators. My first memories of my Uncle were like images cast on the screen of a television set, maternally induced. My fascinated fear of his red sealing ring, his slightly protruding eyes with which he used to look at his house in a way that always made me feel ashamed of it. I could never make up my mind about their colour. Sometimes they seemed brown, sometimes blue, and sometimes a terrifying sea-green. I thought I hated him but I was always eager to please him or run errands, and a word of approval from him made me happy for the rest of the day.

He didn't come very often, but I can remember when I was about thirteen a letter from him coming at breakfast. 'Of course I know he's very clever', my mother sniffed, and then there was a silence.

It wasn't till I was sixteen and a half that he invited me to his flat. We had champagne for dinner.

When I left I knew who and what he was—my real ancestor.

Dream Last Night.

I was on the bank of a deep river. On the further bank were B and a whole crowd standing round E who was tied to the rails of a railway track. An express was racing towards him. I knew that E was being executed on a charge of sabotage and that I had the evidence to save him if I could get there in time. Moored to the other bank was a ferry boat in which stood the ferryman, a tall fair young man who I feel I have met before, but not in real life. His back was turned to me as he was watching the proceedings. Behind me a football match was in progress and the spectators were crying my name. I screamed to the ferryman, but their row drowned my voice completely. As the engine reached E the driver leant out with a disgusting leer, dangling a large old-fashioned fob and I saw the time was 6.0 a.m.

Everything disappeared as a newsboy touched my arm holding out a news-sheet bordered with black. At the top was a photograph of my Uncle Henry, the one which actually appeared at the time, but under it the words 'I have crossed it'. I woke hearing voices as if the battle were lost.

★ ★ ★

Thursday.

The Hollies. Some blazers lounge beneath the calming tree; they talk in birds' hearing; girls come with roses, servants with a tray, skirting the sprinkler preaching madly to the grass, where mower worries in the afternoons; draw not your leagues away, Too-much-alone.

Between box-edges, past the weathering urns, walk, acquire their ruses. Visit enough till coat-stand in their hall seem arsenal stocked against a life-time's harm.

These also dogs follow, are loved by grooms; milder than hawks have conquered fear of ledges, sailed over fishes swaying with the sea; have looked in ponds but not for reassurance; bathing in front of inattentive weasels, a tan-armed gonsil or a first-of-May.

O turn your head this way, be faithful here. The working mouth, the flimsy flexing knee, the leap in summer in the rubber shoes, these signal in their only codes. There is no other rendezvous for you to keep before the simple night (at night elopement is potty from the private drome. The little train will halt to pick up flowers.) There are no other agents if these were cads. You stand in time's nick now with

all to lose. The spies have gone to phone for their police—locked behind mirrors in his study, his secret heroes ragging round the fire, Death swots ungraceful, keen on his career; notes in his journal ‘I have never lived—left-handed and ironic, but have loved’.

Again. Always the same weakness. No progress against this terrible thing. What would E say if he knew? Dare I tell her? Does Derek suspect? He looked at me very strangely at dinner. No; no one must ever know. If the enemy ever got to hear of it, my whole work would be nullified. I must be careful to avoid sitting up with E alone to late hours. The signed confession in my pocket shall remain unread, always.

A cold bath every morning. Never to funk but to return everything, no matter how distasteful the explanations. (The Hollies this evening, mind.) Whenever temptation is felt go at once to do mechanical drawing.

Hands, in the name of my Uncle, I command you, or . . .

★ ★ ★

Of the Enemy Gambits.

Hygiene against the awareness of likeness.

Newspapers against the awareness of difference.

To-day 'Seven round-contest against Worry. Distinguished psychologist as referee'. On the football page—'Hearts humbled by Queens'.

Beethameer, Beethameer, bully of Britain,
With your face as fat as a farmer's bum;
Though you pose in private as a playful kitten
Though the public you poison are pretty well dumb,
They shall turn on their betrayer when the time is
come.

The cousins you cheated shall recover their nerve
And give you the thrashing you richly deserve.

In kitchen, in cupboard, in club-room, in mews,
In palace, in privy, your paper we meet
Nagging at our nostrils with its nasty news,
Suckling the silly from a septic teat.
Leading the lost with lies to defeat;
But defeat shall force them to find the nerve
To give you the thrashing you richly deserve.

To yoke you suggest we should offer our necks,
We should learn from your lips the laws to spell
Of Art, of Religion, of Science, of Sex,
You appear as the prophet, your periods swell.
Are you sure you're our Saviour? We're certain you
smell:

All of us itching in every nerve
To give you the thrashing you richly deserve.

Each talented contributor tells what he thinks.
A lady novelist has given her view,
A father of fourteen, a professor of stinks,
A beater, a bone-setter, a curate from Kew;
So you take us for trees, so you think, do you,
We'll forget your games and forgive your nerve?
No, we'll give you the thrashing you richly deserve.
Heathcliffe before you as a newspaper peer:
I'm the sea-dog, he said, who shall steer this ship;
I advertise idiocy, uplift, and fear,
I succour the State, I shoot from the hip;
He grasped at God but God gave him the slip.
Life gave him one look and he lost his nerve,
So you'll get the thrashing you richly deserve.

10,000 Cyclostyle copies of this for aerial distribution.

★ ★ ★

To return to the interest you were discussing, you were saying:

I'm afraid it sounds more like a fairy story.
There was a family called Do:
There were Do—a, Do—ee, and other Do—s
And Uncle Dick and Uncle Wiz had come to stay
with them
(Nobody slept that night).
Now Do—a loved to bathe before his breakfast
With Uncle Dick, but Uncle Wiz . . .

Well?

As a matter of fact the farm was in Pembrokeshire.
The week the Labour Cabinet resigned
Dick had returned from Germany in love.
I hate cold water and am very fond of potatoes. . . .
You're wondering about these scratches?

Well, I thought perhaps . . .

Thereby the gorse between Stumble Head and
Llwndda
Gabriel was entertaining a young couple, so . . .

Gabriel?

O I hadn't meant to let the name out;
To explain all that I shall have to go a long way
back.

There was an economics Don called Harrod
(Now Junior Censor)

Who asked me to call on a young scholar.
I stayed with Bill often after that,
He came from the same school but not till a year
later.

There is a lot about the Essay Club and Stephen,
But I shall have to leave that out.
The point I want to make clear is . . .

But Tennyson, remember, thought trains ran in
grooves;
The Queen believed cigars were all one price.

Precisely! I'm certain, just because I do remember.
Someone had coined the phrase 'a cheat of bursars',
And that was laughed at.

We gambled away our shirts in the last evening;
There must have been something, don't you see,
There must have been, to have these memories about.
And then this morning at the dentist's they gave me
gas.

Going under I heard a cry
Under that sea, a hydrocephalic cry,
'Keep calm,' I tried to shout, 'I'm coming'; I was
almost there.

Light broke.
Someone was giving me a glass of water;
Something had just been done to me without my
knowledge.
Had I arrived in time?
I should have said the word by now to have con-
vinced you.

Yes, but the interest.

★ ★ ★

The new batch of recruits arrived this morning,
looking tired after the night journey but very ex-
cited about to-morrow. Poor little buggers. I'm
afraid half of them won't get through the medical.
Sands is too rough.

★ ★ ★

There is something peculiarly horrible about the idea of women pilots.

★ ★ ★

Derek was killed this afternoon. Went into a barrel roll at 8000 ft. and never came out. His collar bone was sticking through his navel. Of course the mechanics swear the machine was all right when it left the hangar, but I know better. When I saw the driver of that Renault wearing sphagnum moss in his cap, I ought to have realised. I ought never to have let him go up. Greath in March, Bronx last month, and now Derek. Yet B is still only half convinced.

★ ★ ★

Enemy messages to be decoded---‘The little apples will grow again.’ ‘Don’t touch me or I’ll spill.’

★ ★ ★

Another awful night. Cabbage water very little good now. Waking early after night terrors. The faint tang of irretrievable disaster; as if Lake Constance were outside the window and had destroyed all countries and human beings. Solitude. Among the gooseberry bushes in the kitchen garden he crouches, scratched, holding his breath as the noisy steps approach. ‘I bet he’s here somewhere.’ In the greenhouse they loiter, imagine coiled shapes, malignant, phosphorescent, in the zinc darkness of a tank.

Come on you chaps! After their change of heart, a desert silence, shadows of wool-white clouds. A caterpillar, lacking compass or guides, crosses the vast uplands of his shoe, whom bees ignore. They have all gone in to tea. No one will look for you again.

Derek buried to-day. A choir of quarrymen and boys. Imagining one's death-bed; universal understanding and forgiveness; lines produced to meet at infinity; the eternised moment.

★ ★ ★

Conference at Arncliffe in the old water tower. B looking ill; Allen and Page like two rival railway companies—jealous and unaccommodating. Got Absalom through, but they still haggle about the cost of Lot's Wife (this operation is essential). Percy is not to be trusted and should be watched. The enemy's strength lies in the people's disbelief in his existence. If they believed he would be powerless. To convince them—unrelaxed attention—demonstration—sacred abuse.

★ ★ ★

Tea to-day at the Cardross Golf Club. A Hot-bed. Far too many monks in Sinclair Street.

★ ★ ★

There are some birds in these valleys
Who flutter round the careless
With intimate appeal,

By seeming kindness trained to snaring,
They feel no falseness.

Under the spell completely
They circle can serenely,
And in the tricky light
The masked hill has a purer greenness.
Their flight looks fleeter.

But fowlers, O, like foxes,
Lie ambushed in the rushes.
Along the harmless tracks
The madman keeper crawls through brushwood,
Axe under oster.

Alas, the signal given,
Fingers on trigger tighten.
The real unlucky dove
Must smarting fall away from brightness
Its love from living.

★ ★ ★

Of the Enemy's Definitions by Negation:

Unless you do well you will *not* be loved.
I'm *afraid* of death (instead of *I* want to live).
Pleasure is the *decrease* of pain (olives—whisky).

To him glory is only a reversal of rôle—the rejected lover's phantasy—to be cold and to be desired, *e.g.* the Mimosa's affair with the parachute jumper.

★ ★ ★

Day-dreams of victory. Bomb fragment exposed by share set up on mantelpiece, a wonder to the new children. Renewal of work at my monograph on Professional Jealousy. Aerial photography of earth-works in a harvest season.

In hours of gentleness always to remember my Uncle, the connection between the last desperate appeals of the lost for help scribbled on the walls of public latrines and such a letter as this.

‘The wound is healing and we can now look back to the war, not forgetting a sacrifice, and all the miseries which it caused, but without such very painful memories.

Some people say “Why does anyone want to think about war at all?” and accuse those who do of militarist ideas. We weren’t thinking about war in 1914, except for a small body of thinking soldiers and statesmen, who saw it inevitably approaching. The British nation as a whole had no thought or idea of war—and yet in a matter of days it was upon us, and we entered it as thoughtlessly and light-heartedly as we would send off a team for a contest match. I must say that the team—in this case the British Expeditionary Force—went into the game just as cheerfully and light-heartedly, if not more so—but that was their job as soldiers. The people who committed them to the greatest war in history, and who

afterwards backed them up and took their turn so nobly, were the British public, the British nation.'

After Victory.

Few executions except for the newspaper peers—
Viscount Stuford certainly. The Rev. McFarlane?

Duchess of Holbrook for the new human zoo.

Tom to have the Welsh Marches.

Ian a choice of Durham and Norfolk.

Edward for films.

Gabriel to Foreign department.

B something he can't spoil.

Other posts to be decided as quickly as possible.

Monthly firework displays.

Much more research needed into the crucial problem—group organisation (the real parts).

★ ★ ★

Very little progress this year. Never quite as bad as that dreadful spring of 1927, but still generally at week-ends. So much better when seeing E. The rose-bowl from Ardencaple still unreturned. Weak. Weak. Weak. No sooner do we succeed a little against the enemy than I let us all down, dishonour my Uncle. Look what happened after my fighting speech at Preston. Little did they guess when they chaired me what kind of a person it was to whom they were awarding that honour.

★ ★ ★

August 23rd, 3 p.m.

We are lost. A cart has just passed carrying the plaster eagle. The enemy are going to attack.

* * *

The enemy orders communicated to-night of August 23rd-24th—

1st Army: 15 attack divisions, 2 ordinary divisions.

2nd Army: 15 attack divisions, 3 ordinary divisions.

3rd Army: 19 attack divisions, 5 ordinary divisions.

Reserve: 3 attack divisions,

To Norna, Dudley, Arno, Niagara—each a corps.

G.H.Q. Commands.

1. That the attack take place on Aug. 28th. First penetration of the hostile position, 7.10 a.m.

2. A feint landing by pleasure paddle-steamers near the bathing-machines on Beach V.

3. A flank attack in an E.N-E. direction by troops carrying special golf-ball grenades, to secure the heights above the club-house and to cut the York road.

4. A main frontal attack. Divisions to be concentrated in the Shenly brick-fields and moved forward to the battle zone in bakers' vans, disguised as nuns.

5. G.H.Q. retains command of 2nd Guard and 26th Nuthatchers.

6. Remaining Armies to act in accordance with the operation order 6925, dated July 26th.

First Day of Mobilisation.

At the pre-arranged zero hour the widow bent into a hoop with arthritis gives the signal for attack by unbending on the steps of \$ Philip's. A preliminary bombardment by obscene telephone messages for not more than two hours destroys the *morale* already weakened by predictions of defeat made by wireless-controlled crows and card-packs. Shock troops equipped with wire-cutters, spanners and stink-bombs, penetrating the houses by infiltration, silence all alarm clocks, screw down the bathroom taps, and remove plugs and paper from the lavatories. The *Courier* Offices are the first objective. A leading article accusing prominent citizens of arson, barratry, coining, dozing in municipal offices, espionage, family skeletons, getting and bambling, heresy, issuing or causing to be issued false statements with intent to deceive, jingoism, keeping disorderly houses, mental cruelty, loitering, nepotism, onanism, piracy on the high seas, quixotry, romping at forbidden hours, sabotage, tea-drinking, unnatural offences against minors, vicious looks, will-burning, a yellow streak, is on the table of every householder in time for a late breakfast.

Conversion of hotels and boarding houses into private nursing-homes is carried out as rapidly as possible. Major operations without anaesthetics begin at noon. At 6 p.m. passages of unprepared translation from dead dialects are set to all non-

combatants. The papers are collected at 6.10. All who fail to obtain 99% make the supreme sacrifice. Candidates must write on three sides of the paper.

Second Day.

The nine o'clock business train leaves on a mystery trip through the more remote upland valleys; there is no refreshment car. Packed excursions at five-minute intervals, jumping the points, enter the sea from Craighendran Pier. Slight modifications in the trams connecting the electric circuit with the seat buttons shrivel the lolling parcel-carriers. Banks make payments in fairy gold; girl-guides, nocturnally stimulated, mob vicars at the climax of their sermons; organists light pipes at the moment of consecration; at evensong choirs sing hymns in hesitation waltz time. Form-masters find crude graphite on their blackboards; the boys, out of control, imbibe Vimto through india-rubber tubing, openly pee into the ink-pots.

A white-faced survivor informs the prison governor that the convicts, loosed, storming the execution shed, are calculating the drop formula by practical experiment, employing warders of varying weights.

Third Day.

Secret catalysts introduced into the city reservoirs convert the entire drinking supply into tepid

urine. Adulterated milk drawn by order of the military from consumptive gentlewomen is only procurable by those who are fortunate enough to possess attractive daughters. The factories, structurally altered, reduce all raw products to an irritant filter-passing dust. Eyeballs of ravished virgins, black puddings made from the blood of the saints, sucking children already flyblown, are exposed for sale at famine prices. For those who desire an honourable release, typhoid lice, three in a box, price twopence, are peddled in the streets by starving corner boys.

Fourth Day.

All menstruation ceases. Vampires are common in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral, epidemics of lupus, halitosis, and superfluous hair.

Fifth Day.

Pressure of ice, falling fire. The last snarl of families beneath the toppling column. Biting at wounds as the sutures tear.

24th.

Four days. What's the use of counting them now?

25th.

Why, the words in my dream under Uncle's picture, 'I HAVE CROSSED IT'. To have been told the secret that will save everything and not to have listened; and now less than three days in which to

prepare myself. My whole life has been mistaken, progressively more and more complicated, instead of finally simple.

My incredible blindness, with all the facts staring me in the face, not to have realised these elementary truths.

1. The power of the enemy is a function of our resistance, therefore

2. The only efficient way to destroy it—self-destruction, the sacrifice of all resistance, reducing him to the state of a man trying to walk on a frictionless surface.

3. Conquest can only proceed by absorption of, *i.e.* infection by, the conquered. The true significance of my hands. 'Do not imagine that you, no more than any other conqueror, escape the mark of grossness.' They stole to force a hearing.

To begin at once.

To my Uncle, perpetual gratitude and love for this crowning mercy. For myself, absolute humility.

I know that I am I, living in a small way in a temperate zone, blaming father, jealous of son, confined to a few acts often repeated, easily attracted to a limited class of physique, yet envying the simple life of the gut, desiring the certainty of the breast or prison, happiest sawing wood, only knowledge of the real, disturbances in the general law of the dream; the quick blood fretting against the

slowness of the hope; a unit of life, needing water and salt, that looks for a sign.

What have I written? Thoughts suitable to a sanatorium. Three days to break a lifetime's pride.

26th.

Two days.

Read Mifflin on Air Currents.

A complete course for the commercial flying licence.

The life of Count Zeppelin (obtainable in Air and Airways Library).

Remember to pay Bryden's Bill.

To answer C's letter.

The £100 for Tom's holiday.

Destroy all letters, snapshots, locket, etc., of E.

Further purification.

Deep breathing exercises instead of smoking.

A clean shirt, collar and handkerchief each morning till the end.

27th.

Supper at The Hollies. E alone. Salmon fresh from the loch. O understand, darling. God just loves us all, but means to be obeyed; and unassuming is our solid tear. Thank you for your share in this, but good-bye. Uncle, save them all, make me worthy.

28th.

3.40 a.m. Pulses and reflexes, normal.

Barometric reading, 30.6.

Mean temperature, 34° F.,

Fair. Some cumulus cloud at 10,000
feet. Wind easterly and moderate.

Hands in perfect order.

BOOK III
SIX ODES

I

WATCHING IN three planes from a room overlooking the courtyard

That year decaying,

Stub-end of year that smoulders to ash of winter,

The last day dropping;

Lo, a dream met me in middle night, I saw in a vision

Life pass as a gull, as a spy, as a dog-hated dustman:

Heard a voice saying—'Wystan, Stephen, Christopher, all of you,

Read of your losses'.

Shaped me a Lent scene first, a bed, hard, surgical,

And a wound hurting;

The hour in the night when Lawrence died and I came

Round from the morphia.

A train went clanking over the bridges leaving the city;

A sleep-walker pushed on groaning down the velvet passage;

The night-nurse visited—'We shall not all sleep, dearie',

She said, and left me.

Felt sap collecting anon in unlighted cylinders
For birdward facing;
The flat snake moving again in the pit, the schoolboy
From home migrating.
After a night of storm was a lawn in sunlight,
A colleague bending for measurements there at the
rain-gauge,
Gritting his teeth after breakfast, the Headmaster
muttered
‘Call no man happy’.

Came summer like a flood, did never greediest
gardener
Make blossoms flusher:
Sunday meant lakes for many, a browner body
Beauty from burning:
Far out in the water two heads discussed the posi-
tion,
Out of the reeds like a fowl jumped the undressed
German,
And Stephen signalled from the sand dunes like a
wooden madman
‘Destroy this temple’.

It did fall. The quick hare died to the hound’s hot
breathing,
The Jewess fled Southwards;
The drunken Scotsman, regarding the moons hedge-
rising,
Shook and saluted:

And in cold Europe, in the middle of Autumn destruction,
Christopher stood, his face grown lined with wincing
In front of ignorance—‘Tell the English’, he
shivered,
‘Man is a spirit’.

What I saw further was general but in sorrow,
Many together
Forgiving each other in the dark of the picture
palaces
But past forgiveness;
The pair walking out on the mole, getting ready to
quarrel,
The exile from superb Africa, employed in a laundry;
Deserters, mechanics, conjurers, delicate martyrs,
Yes, self-regarders.

I saw the brain-track perfected, laid for conveying
The fatal error,
Sending the body to islands or after its father,
Cold with a razor:
One sniffed at a root to make him dream of a woman,
One laid his hands on the heads of dear little pages;
Neither in the bed nor on the *arrête* was there shown
me
One with power.

‘Save me!’ the voice commanded, but as I paused
hesitant
A troop rushed forward.

Of all the healers, granny in mittens, the Mop, the
white surgeon,

And loony Layard.

The captains grouped round the flagstaff shut up
their glasses,

Broke yelping over the gravel—as I stood a spec-
tator;

One tapped my shoulder and asked me ‘How did you
fall, sir?’

Whereat I awakened.

Roof-line sharpens, intense in the New Year morning;
Far down in courtyard

Beggar addresses the earth on the state of East
Europe:

‘Won’t you speak louder?

Have you heard of someone swifter than Syrian
horses?

Has he thrown the bully of Corinth in the sanded
circle?

Has he crossed the Isthmus already? is he seeking
brilliant

Athens and us?’

II

(TO GABRIEL CARRITT, CAPTAIN OF SEDBERGH
SCHOOL XV, SPRING, 1927)

WALK ON air do we? And how!
With the panther's pad, with his lightness
Never did members conspire till now
 In such whole gladness:
Currents of joy incalculable in ohms
Wind from the spine along the moving arms
Over the great alkali wastes of the bowel, calming
 them too.

Success my dears—Ah!
Rounding the curve of the drive
Standing up, waving, cheering from car,
 The time of their life:
The fags are flushed, would die at their heroes' feet;
Quick, someone, tug at that handle, get
At them shouting, shoulder them high, who won by
 their pluck and their dare.

Tudor from the tram-lined town,
Self-confident under the moor;
Scott from the chalk-pitted horse-taming down,
 And otter-smooth Kerr:

Sure-footed MacColl from the life-hostile gabbros of
Skye,
Red-bush Abrahall, diving Gray,
Waters from dykes of the Wash, and Fagge from the
bird-singing plain.

The Bryants, major and minor,—
Surely their pater the Dean
Sings as he waters his roses like a soldier—

Proud of each son :

Lanky-legged Lloyd, and Morgan from Aberdovey,
Peacock and long-skulled Cornish Davy.

Not least, though we mention him last: we ought to
have mentioned him sooner.

Symondson—praise him at once!—
Our right-wing three-quarter back
Sergy, bulwark of every defence,

Mainspring of attack:

When aligned like a squadron of bombers they flew
downfield

Over and over again we yelled
‘Let the ball out to Sergy!’ They did, he scored, and
we dance.

That rush when he fell on the ball,
The surprised applause was so loud
That the horses galloped to look over wall
At delirious crowd.

Strangers smiled at each other, off their English
guard
And watching weak from hospital ward,
Propped-up cases felt ever so well when he dropped
that goal.

Sandroyd—what of their side?—
In jerseys of chocolate and white
Prancing for prowess, posh in their pride,
unbeaten last night:
No changing-room clapping for them, no welcoming
dazzle,
But a hushed school receives them in a drizzle,
Clambering, sodden, from a maundering chara.,
licked to the wide.

Easy for us to tell,
Defeats on them like lavas
Have fallen, fell, kept falling, fell
On them, poor lovie:
Regents have ranted, and flash-talk in a quarry
plotted
To burn down barns, but both were noughted;
On purse-proud, swank-limb, cock-wit has it fallen,
and so it will.

Heart of the heartless world
Whose pulse we count upon;
Alive, the live on which you have called
Both pro and con,

Good to a gillie, to an elver times out of mind
Tender, to work-shy and game-shy kind
Does he think? Not as kind as all that; he shall find
one fine day he is sold.

From darkness your roses came
In one little week of action
By fortunate prejudice to delighting form
And profuse production;
Now about these boys as keen as mustard to grow
Give you leave for that, sir, well in them, flow,
Deep in their wheel-pits may they know you foaming
and feel you warm.

With the change in the breathing, the hair
Clustering at the sensitized nodes,
Charge them in shock after shock, make them 'ware
The eternal needs:
Whether at lathe-work, loading, reading, to resist
Rather! the torsion, the tension, the list:
Fellows you well may be proud of, no matter when
or where,

Whom we shall like to remember
We welcomed once as a team
With bands under beeches, tubas by timber,
The cup brought home:
Not, as the desperate need to, do we clutch at arm,
Dark fearers, dreading December's harm,
Not now. Joy docked in every duct, we to the right
sleep come.

III

(TO EDWARD UPWARD, SCHOOLMASTER)

WHAT SIREN zooming is sounding our coming
Up frozen fjord forging from freedom
 What shepherd's call
 When stranded on hill,
 With broken axle
 On track to exile?

With labelled luggage we alight at last
Joining joking at the junction on the moor
 With practised smile
 And harmless tale
 Advance to meet
 Each new recruit.

Expert from uplands, always in oilskins,
Recliner from library, laying down law,
 Owner from shire,
 All meet on this shore
 Facing each prick
 With ginger pluck.

Our rooms are ready, the register signed,
There is time to take a turn before dark,

See the blistering paint
On the scorching front,
Or icicles sombre
On pierhead timber.

To climb the cliff path to the coastguard's point
Past the derelict dock deserted by rats,
Look from concrete sill
Of fort for sale
To the bathers' rocks
The lovers' ricks.

Our boots will be brushed, our bolsters pummelled,
Cupboards are cleared for keeping our clothes.
Here we shall live
And somehow love
Though we only master
The sad posture.

Picnics are promised and planned for July
To the wood with the waterfall, walks to find,
Traces of birds,
A mole, a rivet,
In factory yards
Marked strictly private.

There will be skating and curling at Christmas—
indoors
Charades and ragging; then riders pass
Some afternoons
In snowy lanes

Shut in by wires
Surplus from wars.

In Spring we shall spade the soil on the border
For blooming of bulbs; we shall bow in Autumn

When trees make passes,
As high gale pushes,
And bewildered leaves
Fall on our lives.

We are here for our health, we have not to fear
The fiend in the furze or the face at the manse;

Proofed against shock
Our hands can shake;
The flag at the golf-house flutters
And nothing matters.

We shall never need another new outfit;
These grounds are for good, we shall grow no more,

But lose our colour
With scurf on collar
Peering through glasses
At our own glosses.

This life is to last, when we leave we leave all,
Though vows have no virtue, though voice is in vain,

We live like ghouls
On posts from girls
What the spirit utters
In formal letters.

Watching through windows the wastes of evening,
The flare of foundries at fall of the year.

The slight despair
At what we are,
The marginal grief
Is source of life.

In groups forgetting the gun in the drawer
Need pray for no pardon, are proud till recalled
By music on water
To lack of stature
Saying Alas
To less and less.

Till holding our hats in our hands for talking
Or striding down streets for something to see
Gas-light in shops
The fate of ships
And the tide-wind
Touch the old wound.

Till the town is ten and the time is London
And nerves grow numb between north and south
Hear last in corner
The pffwungg of burner
Accepting dearth
The shadow of death.

IV

(TO JOHN WARNER, SON OF REX AND FRANCES
WARNER)

ROAR GLOUCESTERSHIRE, do yourself proud;
The news I tell you should make you move
As a pride of lions or an exaltation of larks
Not who you are but whom you foster
At Amberley near Stroud
Shall give you full marks.

I cannot state it too clearly, I shall not refrain,
It is John, son of Warner, has pulled my chain.

John Bull, John Bull, I understand well;
I know, Bull, I know what you want me to tell.
Calm, Bull, calm, news coming in time;
News coming, Bull; calm, Bull,
Fight it down, fight it down,
That terrible hunger; calm, Bull; first
We must have a look round, we must know the worst.

England our cow
Once was a lady—is she now?

Walk through her cities, walk with a pal
Through the streets between the power-house and
green canal

And see what they're at—our proletariat.
O my, what peeps
At disheartened sweeps—
Fitters and moulders,
Wielders and welders,
Dyers and bakers
And boiler-tube makers,
Poofs and ponces,
All of them dunces.
Those over thirty,
Ugly and dirty,
What are they doing
Except just stewing?
Content for the year
With foods out of tins and very small beer—
Flaking the rust off obsolete plant
Slacking at the corners, thinking 'I can't'.
Sloping up the hill, for they've nowhere else to go—
To the park and the platforms where the windbags
 blow
Spying on athletes playing on a green,
Spying on kisses shown on a screen,
Their minds as pathic as a boxer's face,
Ashamed, uninteresting, and hopeless race.

As for our upper class:
Let's be frank a moment, fellows—they won't pass.
Majors, Vicars, Lawyers, Doctors, Advertisers,
 Maiden Aunts,

They're all in a funk but they daren't do a bunk,
Either rufflers or mousers, they haven't a chance.
'I shall have to be careful until I see,
But I'll like you if you'll love me.'
'Careful, careful; can we afford it?'
'Careful, careful; till we've insured it.'
'Careful, careful; don't kiss me please.
Don't you know there's such a thing as disease?'
'The Duchess of Atholl with a *lorgnette*
Is observing the dunes; we can't bathe yet.'
'If she or the Bishop of London caught us,
They'd be certain to report us.'
'Hush! not a word of the beast with two backs
Or Mead and Muskett will be on our tracks!'
Wakeful at night, in the morning fagged;
They feel like angels, but they look just shagged.
'Kind to their women, indeed too kind,
It's a pity their women go out of their mind.'

Who will save?
Who will teach us how to behave?

O yes, MacDonald's a giant,
President Hoover's a giant.
Baldwin and Briand are giants—
Haven't they told us?
But why have they sold us?
They said they were winners,
They were only beginners.
Pygmies, poor dears,

Beside the Giant Sloths and the Giant Despairs.
Mussolini, Pilsudski and Hitler have charm
But they make such a noise:
We're getting a little tired of boys,
Of the ninny, the mawmet and the false alarm.

These had stopped seeking
But went on speaking,
H ve not contributed,
But have diluted.

These ordered light
But had no right,
And handed on
War and a son

Wishing no harm.
But to be warm
These went to sleep
On the burning heap.

Who will save?
Who will teach us how to behave?

'Youth's on the march' says Jocker to Prushun.
Youth's the solution of every good scout.
Youth has the secret Toc H has found out.
Youth's a success.
Youth has the blessing of the *Sunday Express*.
Youth says the teacher.
Youth says the bishop.

Youth says the bumslapper.

'Strewth, says I,

They're most of them dummies who want their
mummies,

In Rolls or on bicycle they bolt for mama,

Let them scorch as they like for they won't get
far.

Look at them now,

Sooner or later it'll come to the pater,

Sooner or later there'll be a row.

Who believes them, wants to choose
Between their efforts to amuse.

Attractions for their coming week
Are Masters Wet, Dim, Drip and Bleak:

Master Wet will show his pet,

Master Drip will crack his whip,

Master Bleak will speak in Greek,

Master Dim will sing a hymn.

Who'll save, who—

Who'll save John Bull?

From losing his wool.

Now, Bull, now

I'll tell you who,

I'll tell you how

The flying stationer flies round the corner.

Here it is, look! John, son of Warner,

John, son of Warner, shall rescue you.

Yon awkward pairs in studios upstairs
Spending a secret hour in learning
The One-step, the Two-step, the Tango, the Blues,
Stumbling, tripping, practising, turning,
Aching, blushing, almost in tears,
Relax completely now at my news:
A different teacher is born to this nation
He'll teach you deportment and co-ordination.
Because of this boy
You shall dance without difficulty, you shall dance
for joy.

A birthday, yes, a day without rain,
A cake but no candles, we're born again;
The church cat is ordering cocktail glasses,
The general's arranging the ensemble classes,
The cissy is going for cross-country runs,
We haven't much time, get ready at once
For John
Goal-getter, holer-in-one,
Hurdler, high-jumper, hope of our side,
Our hush-hush engine, our wonder liner,
Our gadget, our pride,
Our steel-piercing bullet, our burglar-proof safe,
Will
Save.

Wanted by John
Brains and nerve
Save for shock-troops, some for reserve,

For propaganda, for section-commander,
For transport, dispatches—there're posts to fill.
The son from the bungalow up the hill
With the crazy paving and the squash-court,
He shall report.
The girl from Ivydene if she's alive,
Descend its dreary drive.
To-day may mean division for the newly-weds,
To-day although American Pillar
Fertilize Dorothy Perkins and kill her,
Rose-lovers also must leave their beds,
Caddies and kiddies leave colonel and kitchen
For John, son of Warner, shall find you your pigeon.

Spring again
In the buds, in the birds, in the bowels, and the
 brain,
Spring in the bedroom ventilator.
Spring in the bearing of the hotel waiter,
At every corner
News of Warner,
His march on London,
His enemies undone.

Now Cods the curate coughs in the church,
With Ballocks the rector he's left in the lurch.
In the neo-Tudor club-house the captains frown,
The poor old colonel is red to the ears
'Phoning the Army and Navy for chairs
(He's only got a bayonet and he wants to sit down).

Dear me! Where is that darling dreamer,
That piss-proud prophet, that pooty redeemer
The bigger magician with his Polish lad,
The aesthetic, the ascetic, the malicious and the
mad?
Wouldn't they like to stop the cheering?
Hearing the arrival of his special train,
Hearing the fireworks, the saluting and the guns,
Bob and Miss Belmairs spooning in Spain,
Where is the trained eye? Under the sofa.
Where is Moxon? Dreaming of nuns.
Their day is over, they shall decorate the Zoo
With Professor Jeans and Bishop Barnes at 2d a view,
Or be ducked in a gletcher, as they ought to be,
With the Simonites, the Mosleyites and the I.L.P.

Queer to these birds: yes, very queer,
But to the tryers such a dear,
Only hard
On smuggling, smartness, and self-regard,
See him take off his coat and get down with a
spanner
To each unhappy Joseph and repressed Diana,
Say Bo to the invalids and take away their rugs,
The war-memorials decorate with member-mugs,
The gauche and the lonely he will introduce of course
To the smaller group, the right field of force;
The few shall be taught who want to understand,
Most of the rest shall love upon the land;

Living in one place with a satisfied face
All of the women and most of the men
Shall work with their hands and not think again.

This is the season of the change of heart,
The final keeping of the ever-broken vow,
The official re-marriage of the whole and part,
The poor in employment and the country sound,
Over is the tension, over the alarms,
The falling wage, and the flight from the pound,
The privates are returning now to the farms,
The silo is full, the marsh under plough,
The two worlds in each other's arms.
Falcon is poised over fell in the cool,
Salmon draws
Its lovely quarrons through the pool.
A birthday, a birth
On English earth
Restores, restore will, has restored
To England's story
The directed calm, the actual glory.

ENVOI

Go south, lovey, south by the Royal Scot,
Or hike if you like it, or hire a Ford.
But however you travel, be careful not
To offend County Council or Fisheries Board,
From the Clyde to the Thames where the punts are
moored.

Off to tell Frances and Rex you are come
With a greeting from me and Derek my chum.

In the Helensburgh streets the used leaf falls;
On my way to the field for football I pass
Bonfires crackling behind back walls,
Affectionate fathers washing their cars.

In the Hermitage Park they're cutting the grass.
Scotland is stirring: in Scotland they say
That Compton Mackenzie will be king one day.

We live in the north where the sun is soon gone;
At six the lamps of Greenock are clear,
In uncurtained windows the lights go on,
White in the dining-room, red on the stair;
Night is ahead of London here.

We make ourselves cosy when the weather is wet
With a shocker, a spaniel and a crystal set.

The taps are turned off and the boys are in bed:
Drowsing I droop like a dying flower,
But I'm going to sleep, not going to be dead:
The couples are coming now out of The
Tower
Love has its licence, the darkman's its
power.

Linking their arms they pass up the hill
Motions their own though not what they will.

V

(TO MY PUPILS)

THOUGH AWARE of our rank and alert to obey
orders,

Watching with binoculars the movement of the grass
for an ambush,

The pistol cocked, the code-word committed to
memory;

 The youngest drummer
Knows all the peace-time stories like the oldest
soldier,

 Though frontier-conscious.

About the tall white gods who landed from their
open boat,

Skilled in the working of copper, appointing our
feast-days,

Before the islands were submerged, when the weather
was calm,

 The maned lion common,
An open wishing-well in every garden;
 When love came easy.

Perfectly certain, all of us, but not from the records,
Not from the unshaven agent who returned to the
camp;

The pillar dug from the desert recorded only
The sack of a city,
The agent clutching his side collapsed at our feet,
‘Sorry! They got me!’

Yes, they were living here once but do not now,
Yes, they are living still but do not here;
Lying awake after Lights Out a recruit may speak up:
‘Who told you all this?’
The tent-talk pauses a little till a veteran answers
‘Go to sleep, Sonny!’

Turning over he closes his eyes, and then in a
moment
Sees the sun at midnight bright over cornfield and
pasture,
Our hope. . . . Someone jostles him, fumbling for
boots,
Time to change guard:
Boy, the quarrel was before your time, the aggressor
No one you know.

Your childish moments of awareness were all of our
world,
At five you sprang, already a tiger in the garden,
At night your mother taught you to pray for our
Daddy
Far away fighting,

One morning you fell off a horse and your brother
mocked you:

‘Just like a girl!’

You’ve got their names to live up to and questions
won’t help,

You’ve a very full programme, first aid, gunnery,
tactics,

The technique to master of raids and hand-to-hand
fighting;

Are you in training?

Are you taking care of yourself? are you sure of
passing

The endurance test?

Now we’re due to parade on the square in front of
the Cathedral,

When the bishop has blessed us, to file in after the
choir-boys,

To stand with the wine-dark conquerors in the roped-
off pews,

Shout ourselves hoarse:

‘They ran like hares; we have broken them up like
firewood;

They fought against God’.

While in a great rift in the limestone miles away
At the same hour they gather, tethering their horses
beside them;

A scarecrow prophet from a boulder foresees our
judgment,

 Their oppressors howling;

And the bitter psalm is caught by the gale from the
rocks:

 ‘How long shall they flourish?’

What have we all been doing to have made from
Fear

That laconic war-bitten captain addressing them
now?

‘Heart and head shall be keener, mood the more

 As our might lessens’:

To have caused their shout ‘we will fight till we lie
down beside

 The Lord we have loved’.

There’s Wrath who has learnt every trick of guerilla
warfare,

The shamming dead, the night-raid, the feinted
retreat;

Envy their brilliant pamphleteer, to lying

 As husband true,

Expert Impersonator and linguist, proud of his power
To hoodwink sentries.

Gluttony living alone, austerer than us,

Big simple greed, Acedia famed with them all

For her stamina, keeping the outposts, and some-
where Lust

 With his sapper’s skill,

Muttering to his fuses in a tunnel 'Could I meet here
with Love,

I would hug him to death'.

There are faces there for which for a very long time
We've been on the look-out, though often at home
we imagined,

Catching sight of a back or hearing a voice through
a doorway,

We had found them at last;

Put our arms round their necks and looked in their
eyes and discovered

We were unlucky.

And some of them, surely, we seem to have seen
before:

Why, that girl who rode off on her bicycle one fine
summer evening

And never returned, she's there; and the banker
we'd noticed

Worried for weeks;

Till he failed to arrive one morning and his room was
empty,

Gone with a suitcase.

They speak of things done on the frontier we were
never told,

The hidden path to their squat Pictish tower

They will never reveal though kept without sleep.
for their code is

'Death to the squealer':

They are brave, yes, though our newspapers mention
their bravery

In inverted commas.

But careful; back to our lines; it is unsafe there,
Passports are issued no longer; that area is closed;
There's no fire in the waiting-room now at the
climbers' Junction,

And all this year

Work has been stopped on the power-house; the
wind whistles under

The half-built culverts.

Do you think that because you have heard that on
Christmas Eve

In a quiet sector they walked about on the skyline,
Exchanged cigarettes, both learning the words for
'I love you'

In either language:

You can stroll across for a smoke and a chat any
evening?

Try it and see.

That rifle-sight you're designing; is it ready yet?
You're holding us up; the office is getting impatient;
The square munition works out on the old allotments

Needs stricter watching;

If you see any loiterers there you may shoot without
warning,

We must stop that leakage.

All leave is cancelled to-night; we must say good-bye
We entrain at once for the North; we shall see in the
morning

The headlands we're doomed to attack; snow down
to the tide-line:

Though the bunting signals
'Indoors before it's too late; cut peat for your fires',
We shall lie out there.

VI

NOT, FATHER, further do prolong
Our necessary defeat;
Spare us the numbing zero-hour,
The desert-long retreat.

Against your direct light, displayed,
Regardant, absolute,
In person stubborn and oblique
Our maddened set we foot.

These nissen huts if hiding could
Your eye inseeing from
Firm fenders were, but look! to us
Your loosened angers come.

Against your accusations
Though ready wit devise,
Nor magic countersigns prevail
Nor airy sacrifice.

Weaker we are, and strict within
Your organised blockade,
And from our desperate shore the last
Few pallid youngsters fade.

Be not another than our hope;
Expect we routed shall
Upon your peace; with ray disarm,
Illumine, and not kill.

EPILOGUE

‘O WHERE are you going?’ said reader to rider,
‘That valley is fatal when furnaces burn,
Yonder’s the midden whose odours will madden,
That gap is the grave where the tall return.’

‘O do you imagine,’ said fearer to farer,
‘That dusk will delay on your path to the pass,
Your diligent looking discover the lacking
Your footsteps feel from granite to grass?’

‘O what was that bird,’ said horror to hearer,
‘Did you see that shape in the twisted trees?
Behind you swiftly the figure comes softly,
The spot on your skin is a shocking disease?’

‘Out of this house’—said rider to reader
‘Yours never will’—said farer to fearer
‘They’re looking for you’—said hearer to horror
As he left them there, as he left them there.